

Working Rules of Professionalism

Adopted by the Philadelphia Bar Association

1 Treat with civility opposing counsel, lawyers, and their staffs, witnesses, and the courts and court officers. Professional courtesy is a virtue, not a shortcoming. It is entirely compatible with vigorous advocacy and zealous representation.

2 Keep the lines of communication open. Telephone calls and correspondence should be answered promptly even if the answer is a simple acknowledgment with a promise to respond substantively later.

3 Be mindful of the schedules of others as you are of your own. Seek agreement in advance for the scheduling of meetings, depositions, hearings, and trials. Do not purposely wait until Friday afternoon to make hand deliveries and send telefaxes. Absent exigent circumstances, a reasonable request for a scheduling accommodation should be granted.

4 Be punctual in honoring scheduled appearances. Lateness is demeaning to others and to our profession.

5 If your adversary is entitled to something, provide it without unnecessary formalities.

Discovery disputes and motion practice cost time and money. They should be a last resort.

6 Grant reasonable extensions of time when they will not adversely affect your client's interests. Explain to your client that the consequences of refusing a reasonable extension may be the filing of dilatory objections or motions and the creation of a hostile atmosphere in which your reasonable request will also be refused. Ultimately the hostility will escalate and so will the cost of legal services.

7 Attempt to reconcile differences through negotiation, expeditiously and without needless expense. Taking the initiative to settle a case or resolve a dispute is not a sign of weakness and should not be viewed as such.

Adopted June 28, 1990. All Philadelphia lawyers are encouraged to abide by these guidelines.

The quality of the profession will be as worthy as the character of the people who practice it. Self-esteem and shared respect for each other will ultimately be reflected in responsible professional conduct. The lawyers and law firms of our city are urged to subscribe to and actively promote these values so that the high standards of professionalism that have so long enhanced our professional lives will be preserved and passed on to future generations of Philadelphia lawyers.